automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, automatically screening same to identify the potential presence of identification data steganographically encoded therein;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets screened by said screening operation, discerning identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein; and

E1 Cont

generating a report identifying steganographically encoded empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded;

wherein there is calibration data steganographically encoded within at least one empirical data set, said calibration data having one or more known properties facilitating identification thereof during the discerning step;

the method including identifying the calibration data within the empirical data set and using data obtained thereby to aid in discerning the identification data from the empirical data set;

wherein the empirical data set has been corrupted since being encoded, said corruption including a process selected from the group consisting of: misregistration and scaling of the empirical data set;

the method further including using said data to compensate for said corruption, wherein the identification data can nonetheless be recovered from the empirical data set notwithstanding said corruption.

119

10 11. (Amended) A method for surveying distribution of proprietary empirical data sets on computer sites accessible via the internet, comprising:

providing a master code signal useful for detecting steganographic coding within empirical data sets;

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, discerning certain identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein, said discerning employing said master code signal as a decoding key; and

12

generating a report identifying steganographically encoded empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded;

wherein there is calibration data steganographically encoded within at least one empirical data set, said calibration data having one or more known properties facilitating identification thereof during the discerning step;

the method including identifying the calibration data within the empirical data set and using data obtained thereby to aid in discerning the identification data from the empirical data set;

wherein the empirical data set has been corrupted since being encoded, said corruption including a process selected from the group consisting of: misregistration and scaling of the empirical data set;

114